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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses primarily on the more prominent teacher characteristics research published in the latter half of the 1980s. Literature on the characteristics of elementary, secondary, and college-level teachers is reviewed. Demographic data suggest that today's public school teachers are older and more experienced, and have more years of education than their counterparts in 1980. They are less satisfied with the classroom as a workplace, although they feel that teaching as a profession is satisfactory. The main source of reward appears to be the large block of time allowed away from the classroom where other types of activities can be explored. Today's teachers are less likely to try to communicate with minority and female students at all grade levels, although the number of minority and female students is increasing. Increased professional stress exacerbates the communication situation. Other findings indicate that women teachers still tend to receive lower ratings from their college students, and that teacher behavior appears to be the factor that most strongly influences student evaluation of instruction. White females are still omitted from most of the teacher-student interaction in the classroom, and males receive more and better remedial instruction in mathematics than do females in the elementary grades. (JD)

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Teacher Characteristics

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Teacher Characteristics

In an earlier paper (Darr, 1984), the author reviewed the state of the science of teaching shortly after the Reagan administration began to call for widespread educational reform. Since 1984, a variety of other groups have entered into the call for educational reform. The 1986 National Governor's Conference focused on educational reform at all levels. Their effort culminated in a seven task force report, Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education (Alexander, 1986).

Shortly thereafter, the Holmes Group (Olson, 1987) and the Carnegie Forum for Education and the Economy (Pipho, 1986) became involved in a thorough review of teacher education as part of their overall concern about education in the 21st century.

One of the many valuable byproducts of the increased interest in educational reform has been the revival of interest in research aimed at identifying the characteristics of effective and ineffective teachers.

This paper focuses primarily on the more prominent teacher characterics research published in the latter half of the 1980s. Research into the characteristics of elementary and secondary teachers will be reviewed, followed by a review of research of collegial level teacher characteristics. The paper will conclude with a brief summary of findings.

Elementary and Secondary Teaching

Kottkamp et al. (1986) and Mark and Anderson (1985) found that the average age of teachers, amount of teaching experience, and number of years of education has gradually increased over the last decade. Fewer teachers are

leaving the profession prior to retirement. Mark and Anderson (1986) found that currently the retention rate for female teachers is higher than those of male teachers.

Kottkamp et al. (1986), in a 20-year replication follow-up of Lortie's (1975) study of teachers in Dade County, Florida, found that 1984 teachers (1) are less satisfied with the school as a workplace, (2) place greater emphasis on pupil mastery of subject matter, (3) are less interested in working with "special" students, (4) want to work with "nice, hard-working and respectful students," (5) feel that they receive less instructional help from administration, (6) feel they are better able to assess instructional effectiveness than were their 1964 counterparts, and (7) are less likely to find teaching to be a rewarding experience.

Mitman (1985) found that teachers who showed greater concern for lower achieving students tended to have more flexible and accurate perceptions of students. These same teachers were rated significantly lower on their quality of teaching suggesting that flexibility may be perceived as antithetical to effective teaching when outside observers evaluate that teaching. Brandt (1987) notes that the effective teachers of the 1990s will have to manifest two important skills: (a) understanding the logic of their subject matter, and (b) mastery of a variety of pedagogical skills.

Irvine (1986), in a comprehensive study of teacher/pupil interaction with early elementary and middle elementary children, found that teachers tend to employ different communication patterns with black and white boys and girls. In Meyer and Thompson's (1956) study, teachers tended to interact much more with males than females. Irvine (1986) found that white females received little or no communication from their teachers. Most teacher/pupil exchanges

were between teachers and white males. Teachers increased their interaction with black males as these males matured. Teacher interaction with black females decreased in the upper grades.

Blase (1986) and Moracco et al. (1982) studied stress in the teaching profession. Moracco et al. (1982) developed a reliable instrument for assessing stress in the teacher.

Blase (1986) found that prolonged teacher stress interferes with the teacher's ability to work effectively with students to help them plan realistic goals and to assist them in achieving those goals.

Hayman (1985) and Bettencourt et al. (1986) found that motivation is an important variable in effective teaching. Hayman (1985) found that teachers with high levels of motivation as measured by the Porter Needs Satisfaction Questionnaire were rated significantly more effective by their high school students than were teachers low in motivation. Bettencourt et al. (1986) suggest that the motivation variable is imbedded in the Georgia evaluation system.

Gellman et al. (1986) found a high degree of consistency between parents' and educators' notions about the instructional skills of effective teachers. The number one characteristic identified was "responsive attitude toward students." Teachers and parents were not in complete agreement, however, about the parameters of responsiveness. There was greater agreement about the second factor: management/discipline.

Collier and Holmes (1986) found that "bright students" favored teachers who were "friends," had a thorough knowledge of the subject matter, set high expectations for the class, and stressed concept formation rather than memorization.

Clark et al. (1985) found that education courses had little influence on the pedagogical techniques that student teachers and first-year teachers employed in the classroom. Most pedagogical techniques were rooted in the teacher's experiences as a student. The major cause for this state of affairs may be insufficient opportunity for teacher education students to practice the skills taught in pedagogy classes at the time the skills were acquired.
Nathan (1986) noted that most governors at the 1986 National Governors' Conference felt that improved teacher education is one of the keys to improvement in public education in their state.
Kinze, Sullivan and Berbel (1988) found that eighth-graders performed significantly better on end-of-course examinations when the students had control of C.A.I. program pacing than when the instructor and/or computer set the pace.

Only recently has there been a sustained effort to look at the effect of merit pay and other incentive plans. Bartell (1986) found that the success or failure of such plans in changing teacher behavior was influenced by the process used in assigning ratings and the leadership of the principal. Teachers who perceived the process to have a positive impact on their own satisfaction and needs were more likely to be positively disposed toward the plan and to feel that the plan would achieve its intended goals. Hart (1987) and her colleagues are gathering data across career ladder plans.

Hoogevee and Gutkin (1986) found that peers and principals were quite similar in their ratings of the performances of other teachers in the building, especially in identifying the extreme performers. Self-ratings were uniformly higher than either principal or cohort ratings. Those teachers rated as high by peers and the principals were no more favorably disposed toward merit pay than those rated lower.

Turner, Camilli, Kroc and Hoover (1986) found that salary incentives did affect students' achievement in reading; however, they note that there are many mediating variables to be teased out of this relationship.

Price (1986) notes that current efforts by forces outside the schools to restructure the teaching could have an adverse effect on teachers' attitudes. Teachers with long service in a particular grade level are most likely to react negatively. Reyes (1986) found that teachers' values orientation strongly affected their organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Teachers with utilitarian values were less likely to display organizational commitment and job satisfaction than teachers who demonstrated normative values.

There seems to be little agreement on the effectiveness of faculty and staff development programs even though such programs are becoming increasingly popular, especially in public schools (Thompson & Cooley, 1986).

Breinin (1987), Barth (1986), and Cuban (1986) suggest that such programs do not change teacher behavior because they are imposed on the teachers from outside the system by outsiders. Johnson and Nelson (1987) suggest that governmental agencies and school administrators will be able to change teacher staffing plans and teaching procedure only to the degree that the national, state and local teachers' organizations are involved in such planning early in the process. Guskey (1986) argues that most staff/teacher development programs fail because they try to change the participants' attitudes first rather than focusing upon trying to change the teachers' classroom behavior first, which will improve student performance which in turn changes the teachers attitudes and beliefs. Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser-Bennet (1987) suggest that staff development programs should be structured around teaching approaches that are known for increasing student learning.

Graham (1987) notes the severe shortage of black teachers and the effect of this shortage on the social class structure of the black community.

The recent publication of The New Handbook of Teacher Evaluation (Millman & Darling-Hammond, 1990) attests to the increased interest in the evaluation of elementary and secondary school teachers and thus interest in the characteristics of effective and ineffective school teachers.

College Professoring

Evaluation of teaching and teachers (instructors) has a much richer tradition in higher education than in elementary and secondary schools. Student evaluations of instructors and instruction have long been employed by college and university faculty and administrators to assess instructor effectiveness in teaching even though such data is often overshadowed by other factors such as amount of research and publications in decisions concerning salary, tenure, and promotion. Recently, selected researchers have investigated the total range of factors that influence professorial effectiveness.

Ellson (1986) cites over 75 research studies thatindicate that faculty productivity can be increased if educational institutions are willing to make the commitment necessary.

Reskin (1985) notes that faculty productivity is increased by modification in the personal and social domain of the institution. Blackburn and Lawrence (1986) found little change in the productivity of faculty as a function of increase in age. The main factor affecting faculty productivity was found to be the work environment itself. The more traditionally studied variables--biological, psychological, and sociological factors--demonstrated little predictive validity in their model. Blackburn and Lawrence (1986) note that few faculty live up to their own professional expectations or the expectations of their university.

Bowen and Schuster (1986) and Schuster (1986) found in their visits to 38 campuses across the United States that low faculty productivity was the result of four institutional factors: (1) decline of faculty's working conditions, (2) low faculty morale, (3) decline in the competitiveness of academic careers, and (4) the teaching/researchdilemma. Since 1970, the real purchasing power of the typical faculty member has declined 14%. Research facilties and equipment, offices, and classrooms are often outdated and/or in need of repair. Shifting values on campuses have left many professors frustrated. Because economic conditions are deteriorating and morale is low, it is difficult to attract competent, bright young people to the profession, compounding the morale situation is the increasing emphasis upon publishing, even on small college campuses where there has been little push for faculty to publish in the past. Wisniewski (1986) maintains that all teacher education professors must be scholars; i.e., publish, along with their teaching and spending the equivalent of one day per week in elementary or secondary classrooms.

Baker and Paterson (1986) and McKeachie (1984) suggest that classes that stress high cognitive processing should be evaluated differently. Further, Baker and Paterson (1986) suggest professional education courses should primarily stress high cognitive processing, thus should have their own unique evaluation systems which would assess the perceived application of the course to professional performance.

Basow and Howe (1982), Basow and Silberg (1987), Hall et al. (1982), Kierstead et al. (1988), Lombard and Tocci (1979), and Martin (1984) studied the relationship between gender of the college instructor and perceived effectiveness of instruction. Basow and Howe (1982) conclude that the effect instructor gender interacts with (1) type of questions asked, (2) teacher

personal qualities, and (3) gender of the student when students are asked to evaluate the instructor effectiveness. Basow and Silberg (1987) found that men and women students rated women instructors lower than male instructors.

Basow and Distenfeld (1985) found that instructor gender and expressiveness interact in students' evaluation of teaching expressiveness. Highest female student achievement was with low expressive female instructors. While Lombard and Tocci (1979) reached similar conclusions, they also found that male professors generally were rated as more (1) powerful, (2) effective, (3) concerned, and (4) likeable than female professors. However, in this study, the raters were predominantly male students in a laboratory research course. Kierstead et al. (1988) founded that students generally rated male instructors higher than female instructors when teaching content and techniques were controlled. Female professors had to be "friendlier" to receive ratings comparable to their male peers. Martin's (1984) research suggests that the female instructor must walk the fine line between feminine traits (warm, friendly, and supportive) and masculine traits (authoritarian, objective, and critical) in order to receive ratings comparable to her male counterparts'. Hall et al. (1982) concluded "in terms of student achievement, teacher gender generally has not been found to be a main effect."

Goebel and Cashen (1982) found that age stereotyped information about teachers as persons strongly influenced student ratings of the teacher as a professional. Ratings of interpersonal relationships were more strongly affected by age-stereotyped information than were impersonal teaching relationships. Ratings of younger teachers were more strongly influenced by age-stereotyped information than were the ratings of older teachers.

Erdle et al. (1985) and Rogosa et al. (1984) studied the mediating effect of teacher classroom behavior on student ratings of teacher effectiveness and

on trained observers' ratings. Rogosa et al. (1984) developed a reliable procedure to account for this variable in a scale developed for trained observers. Erdle et al. (1985) concluded that teachers' classroom behavior accounted for about 50% of the variance found in student ratings of instructor effectiveness. Widmeyer and Loy (1988) found that students' pre-course perceptions of the instructor strongly affected their evaluation of the instructor's effectiveness.

Perry and Dickens (1984) found that highly expressive instructors increased student achievement and students' internal locus of control in low incentive conditions. Perry and Magnusson (1987) found that instructor expressiveness is an important variable in student learning when students feel that they have control over their academic achievement. When students feel that they have lost control, then instructor expressiveness does not seem to be related to teaching effectiveness. Perry and Tunna (1988) found that Type A personalities were less affected by perceptions of loss of control than were Type B persons.

Blackburn, Pellino, Boberg and O'Connell (1980) found that most faculty development efforts at the collegiate level focused on improving teaching. Largely these efforts were in effective because teaching was a lesser concern for most faculty. Eble and McKeachie (1985), using data from a survey of three states, concluded that most faculty development programs are effective.

Three of the seven Task Force reports presented at the 1986 session of the National Governors' Association (Alexander, 1986) related to characteristics of teachers and the factors that influence these characteristics. The Task Force on College Quality (Ashcroft, 1986) was primarily concerned with how colleges demonstrate that their students have learned and what they have learned. Extending this notion to teacher education students, how will

teacher candidates demonstrate they they have learned how to teach? Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton's (1986) Task Force on Leadership and Management operated on the assumption that effective leaders make effective schools by being effective supervisors and evaluators of teacher behavior. The Task Force of Taching, chaired by Thomas H. Kean (1986), Governor of New Jersey, focused on recruiting and retaining able persons to the teaching profession. The Task Force's major thrust seemed to be to find the balance between tangible rewards, e.g., salary and classroom environment, and more intrinsic reinforcers, e.g. teaching awards. Recent research is enabling researchers, educators, and the community at large to obtain a clearer picture of the characteristics of teachers and how those characteristics affect the teaching/learning process.

Conclusion

Demographic data suggest that public school teachers of today are older, more experienced, and have more years of education than their counterparts a decade ago. They are less satisfied with the classroom as a workplace, although they feel that teaching as a profession is satisfactory. The main source of reward seems to be the large block of time allowed away from the classroom where other types of activities can be explored.

Just as their counterparts 20 years ago, today's teachers are more comfortable working with the "nice, well-mannered, average students." Today's teachers are less likely to try to communicate with minority and female students at all grade levels, yet the number of minority and female students is increasing. Increased professional stress only exacerbates the communication situation. Yet human relations skills are still held to be important by both parents and educators but as Guyola suggests, they aren't being rewarded.

Teacher effectiveness still appears to be related to the teacher's level of personal motivation.

Although many politicians have stressed the importance of teaching basics and many public school teachers have accepted this demand as a fait accompli, many educators are calling for schools to stress higher cognitive processes, e.g. problem-solving. Such conflicting demands will only increase teacher stress and force teachers to do that with which they feel safe; i.e., those pedagogical practices that they felt worked for them as students.

Women teachers still tend to receive lower ratings from their college students generally. The relationship is now more complex.

Teacher classroom behavior appears to be the factor that most strongly influences student evaluation of instruction.

White girls and women generally are still omitted from most of the teacher/student interaction in the classroom, although they compose an increasingly larger part of the student population. Males receive more and better remedial instruction in mathematics than do females in the elementary grades.

As has been found in previous studies, education majors tend to be less risk-oriented than students in other college disciplines, although those differences are beginning to attenuate also.

Students who share common attitudes and goals for the course with the instructor perform better in the course and rate the course higher than do students who do not share those attitudes and goals.

Amount and type of instructor control has been found to influence learning outcomes. High control restricts students' personal autonomy and their willingness to go beyond acquisition of basic knowledge. However, warmth and emotional climate cannot be separated from classroom activities, per se. Likewise, organizational variables are often difficult to separate for investigation. Some seem to be antithetical, e.g. warm and controlling.

Metzger (1987) and McKeachie (1987) call for improvement of education through increased professionalization of those who carry out the instructional tasks. Metzger (1987) argued for an intense study of teaching as a profession. New, more modern techniques for such research are available and should be employed. McKeachie (1987), in reflecting on his 40 years of collegiate level teaching, notes that his success has been due to: (a) his having the support of his peers for his work with students, prospective teachers, and his research, and (b) his ability to appreciate and to think about the thoughts and motives of his students, colleagues, and administrators. Slowly, the image of the effective teacher is emerging from a variety of sources.

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